



Australian Bureau of Statistics

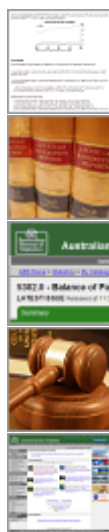
1234.0.55.001 - National Offence Index, 2009

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For further information about these and related statistics, contact the National Information and Referral Service on 1300 135 070.

SUMMARY COMMENTARY

ABOUT THIS RELEASE

The National Offence Index (NOI) is a tool which provides an ordinal ranking of the offence categories in the **Australian Standard Offence Classification (ASOC) 2008 (Second Edition)** (cat. no. 1234.0), according to perceived seriousness. The NOI is used in

instances where there are multiple offences related to a person or criminal case, to determine a principal offence for statistical output purposes. The NOI has been revised in 2009, and is to be used in conjunction with the second edition of ASOC. This is the first time NOI has been published in its own right. This version of NOI supercedes previous versions which have been published most recently as an Appendix to the **Criminal Courts, Australia 2007-08 (cat. no. 4513.0)** and **Prisoners in Australia, 2008 (cat. no. 4517.0)** publications.

Overview



OVERVIEW

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The National Offence Index (NOI) has been developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as a statistical tool to enable the output of nationally comparable offence information within the field of crime and justice statistics. The Index detailed in this publication supercedes the first version of NOI which was released in 2002 as an Appendix in the **Criminal Courts, Australia (cat. no. 4513.0)** publication. This is the first time NOI has been published in its own right.

The National Offence Index is a tool which provides an ordinal ranking of the offence categories in the **Australian Standard Offence Classification (ASOC)** according to perceived seriousness in order to determine a principal sentence. The purpose of NOI is to enable the representation of an offender by a single offence in instances where multiple offences occur within the same incident or where defendants have multiple charges in criminal cases. For instance, where an offender has two or more offences within the same incident that could be classified to different offence categories of ASOC classification (e.g. *0211 - Serious assault resulting in injury* and *0621 - Blackmail and extortion*), by applying NOI, a 'principal offence' can be selected to represent that offender. In this instance the NOI ranking '*23 - Serious assault resulting in injury*' would be the principal offence.

This publication presents the revised NOI, to be used in conjunction with the second edition of **ASOC**.

Historical development of NOI



HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF NOI

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL OFFENCE INDEX

The National Offence Index (NOI) was based on the Offence Seriousness Index developed

by the Crime Research Centre (CRC) in Western Australia. The CRC Index was developed based on research conducted into public perceptions of offence seriousness and consideration of legislated sentences. The CRC Index was first developed in 1991, and subsequently reviewed in 1998 following the introduction of ASOC.

The ABS developed NOI by building on the 1998 version of the CRC Index, using data from the 2001-02 Higher Criminal Courts collection to refine the ordering by seriousness. The severity of sentences handed down to adjudicated finalised defendants were analysed to establish a principal offence for defendants. Consultation with practitioner and advisory groups in crime, courts and corrective services, resulted in further changes to the ranking of selected offences. Use of NOI resulted in significant data quality improvements and increased ease of analysis, particularly with respect to the representation of global sentencing in criminal courts statistics. NOI was first applied in the ABS 2001-02 Criminal Courts collection. For further information regarding the development of NOI refer to Appendix 5 in **Criminal Courts, Australia, 2001-02 (cat. no. 4513.0)**.

NOI was reviewed in 2008-09 following the release of the second edition of ASOC (2008) to ensure the continued compatibility between ASOC and NOI and to reflect a changed profile and perceived seriousness of some offences. External consultations were undertaken with a range of users in the crime and justice field to determine the appropriate ordering of offence groups in order to reflect a more contemporary view of the changes in perceived seriousness of crimes. Changes to the second edition of ASOC included the deletion, addition and modification of ASOC groups that comprise NOI.

NOI is now used in a range of ABS crime and justice collections and is available for use more broadly by other agencies that produce statistical data.

Related Classifications - ASOC



RELATED CLASSIFICATIONS - ASOC

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ASOC has been developed for use in the compilation and analysis of crime and justice statistics in Australia to improve the comparability of crime and justice statistics between Australian jurisdictions. The primary purpose of ASOC is to provide a systematic way of organising criminal offences defined in the criminal laws of Australian state and territory jurisdictions. ASOC defines an offence as any criminal act or omission by a person, persons, organisation or organisations for which a penalty could be imposed by the Australian legal system. The definitions of categories have been specifically chosen to minimise any confusion as to the boundaries of each category. As a result, the content of each category can be valid across jurisdictions, despite differences in legislation.

ASOC is a classification structured with three levels: Divisions are represented by two digit codes (the broadest level of detail); Subdivisions are represented by three digit codes (the intermediate level); and Groups are represented by four digit codes (the finest level). At the division level, the main purpose is to provide a limited number of offence categories that provide a broad overall picture of crimes experienced by victims or committed by offenders.

The subdivision and group levels provide increasingly detailed dissections of these offence categories for the compilation of more specific and detailed crime and justice statistics.

ASOC also has additional codes called 'supplementary codes' to cater for instances where there is insufficient information to code to the four digit group level. Supplementary codes are created by taking a three-digit subdivision code and adding a single zero to create a four digit code. Instances where a subdivision cannot be selected, the most suitable division is selected and two zeros are appended to its code to create a four digit code.

More information about ASOC can be found in **Australian Standard Offence Classification (ASOC), 2008 (Second Edition) (cat. no. 1234.0)**.

Structure of NOI



STRUCTURE OF NOI

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While ASOC has a three level hierarchical structure based on separation at the division, subdivision and group level, NOI ranks offences only at the most detailed group level of ASOC (four digit code) categories.

Treatment of supplementary codes within NOI

Given that supplementary codes exist to cater for situations where there is insufficient information available to accurately code to any of the ASOC groups, the accuracy of a seriousness ranking that includes all these codes is likely to be diminished. As a result, not all supplementary ASOC codes were assigned a NOI ranking.

A NOI ranking has been assigned to an ASOC supplementary code if all group level offences within the same ASOC subdivision and/or division hierarchy were co-located within NOI. Where a ranking has been assigned to a supplementary code, it immediately follows the lowest ranked ASOC group level offence within that same ASOC subdivision and/or division. As an example, Figure 1 below illustrates that all group level offences for ASOC *Division 03 - Sexual assault and related offences* are co-located with NOI (i.e. the NOI rankings are adjacent) and therefore the supplementary code *0300 - Sexual assault and related offences, n.e.c.* has been assigned the NOI ranking immediately following the lowest ranked group level offence *0329 - Non-assaultive sexual offences n.e.c.*

Figure 1: Excerpt of NOI, showing the inclusion of the supplementary codes for ASOC Division 03 - Sexual Assault and Related Offences.

2009 NOI Ranking	ASOC Code
7	0311 Aggravated sexual assault
8	0321 Non-aggravated sexual offences against a child
9	0323 Sexual servitude offences
10	0322 Child pornography offences
11	0312 Non-aggravated sexual assault
12	0329 Non-assaultive sexual offences, n.e.c.
13	0300 Sexual assault and related offences, n.f.d.

Supplementary code

Conversely, a NOI ranking has not been assigned to an ASOC supplementary code if the group level offences of a particular subdivision or division hierarchy are spread throughout NOI rankings. For example, there is a significant difference in perceived seriousness between ASOC group level code *1011 - Import Illicit Drugs* (ranked 14 in NOI), and *1042 - Use Illicit Drugs* (ranked 125). Whilst supplementary codes at the subdivision level for illicit drug offences have been assigned throughout NOI, the supplementary code at the division level for illicit drugs (*1000 - Illicit drug offences not further defined*) have not been assigned a NOI ranking as the perceived seriousness cannot accurately be determined.

Application of this approach was considered for each ASOC supplementary code. In cases where the ASOC group level codes were not immediately adjacent, consideration was given to the types of offences that separated the relevant group level ASOC codes within the NOI rankings. Exceptions were made to this rule, provided the interleaved groups were unlikely to co-occur and statistical outputs were unlikely to be affected.

Additionally, supplementary codes were not assigned a NOI ranking if a division comprised only one ASOC group code (e.g. *Division 07 - Unlawful Entry with Intent*).

Related Products

Australian Standard Offence Classification (ASOC) 2008 (Second Edition).(cat. no. 1234.0)

Further Information



FURTHER INFORMATION

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For more information about this Classification contact:

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About this Release

The National Offence Index is a tool which provides an ordinal ranking of the offence categories in the Australian Standard Offence Classification (ASOC) according to perceived seriousness in order to determine a principal offence for an offender with multiple offences. The NOI has been revised in 2009 and is to be used in conjunction with the second edition of ASOC. This is the first time the NOI has been published in its own right.

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